

Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission FY 17 Annual Report

Founded in 1967, the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) leverages the value of people working together to assist its 23 member municipalities in providing effective local government and working cooperatively to address regional issues. CVRPC is governed by representatives from the 20 municipalities of Washington County and the three Orange County towns of Orange, Washington, and Williamstown. The legislative body of each municipality selects the community's representative to the Commission.

Municipal Planning and Implementation

RPCs act as a cost effective professional planning staff for many of Vermont's municipalities. Work in recent years has been focused on improving town plans and local permitting through education and enhanced consultations (on-site training), bylaw modernization, facilitating transition to Development Review Boards and implementing new requirements for economic development and flood resiliency planning. Current and clear plans and bylaws are essential in smooth state and local permitting. This work is supported through local and regional planning funds, local contributions and other grants. All technical assistance provided this year is shown on the At Work map; highlights include:

- Developed village master plan for East Montpelier using Municipal Planning Grant funds. Coupling an open house for the school with one for the master plan involved youth in planning and gave community voice to a preferred vision for the future of the village area.
- Completed nine statutory consultations with municipalities; used the results to target 2018 planning assistance, including building an online data library and providing capital budgeting, forest integrity, and energy planning assistance.
- Acted as extended staffing for municipalities to assist five towns with plan updates.
- Assisted three towns with bylaw amendments and updates. Towns are modernizing 1980s bylaws and working to achieve consistency between bylaws and municipal plans.
- Assisted five towns with grant writing to support three municipal plan updates, maintain Cabot's village center vitality, and connect land use with rural transportation in Calais.
- Hosted training and responded to ten towns regarding the statewide parcel mapping effort.
- Hosted municipal trainings on the Essentials of Land Use Planning and Regulation, rural economic development, DHCD's Planning Manual, ICS 402, and Act 174 energy standards.

Regional Planning

RPC's coordinate planning at the regional level through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive regional plan, and related studies. These plans guide local planning and the investment decisions of the public and private sectors.

In 2017, CVRPC adopted Regional Plan updates. Commissioners reviewed and set priorities for implementation actions, which the Commission uses to direct its annual work plan and budget.

CVRPC completed a housing plus transportation affordability analysis for Central Vermont. Traditional measures of housing affordability ignore the cost of transportation, typically a household's second largest expenditure. The analysis furthers the concept of location affordability in Central Vermont. Its findings will be incorporated into the Regional Plan update. CVRPC is using the analysis for workforce education about the benefits of living and working in Central Vermont.

CVRPC also built an enhanced regional energy plan. Seventeen (17) individuals, representing utilities, private business, municipalities, state agencies, public transit, and regional non-profits, worked cooperatively to develop draft policies and actions. The plan was submitted to the Public Service Department and other State agencies for comment prior to releasing it for public comment. CVRPC also initiated an update to its Substantial Regional Impact definition and criteria and its project review process. These items guide the Commission's participation in Act 250 and Section 248.

To foster plan implementation, CVRPC assessed its municipal services and responded with two changes. The GIS Services Policy was modified to increase municipal access to mapping services. CVRPC initiated hiring of new staff to increase its land use planning services.

CVRPC maintained and expanded its commitment to fostering regional and intermunicipal activities, a high priority of the Regional Plan. CVRPC invested more than \$12,000 in staff support in joint stormwater planning for five Mad River towns, \$3,000 to assist the Wrightsville Beach Recreation District with financial management and strengthening internal controls, and \$1,700 to support financial services for the Resource Management Alliance. CVRPC continued to implement its mission by facilitating intermunicipal conversations about stormwater planning, flood resilience, forest integrity, and energy planning. These conversations resulted in joint municipal initiatives for 2018.

CVRPC reviews state permit applications to ensure proposed projects conform with the Regional Plan. The Project Review Committee reviewed two major Act 250 applications and determined both conformed to the plan.

Brownfields

Vermont RPCs have sought and have been awarded over 10 million dollars for this economic development initiative. Environmental site assessments allow properties to be sold, developed or re-developed in ways that benefit the local and state economy, create or protect jobs and increase housing opportunities.

CVRPC has an active brownfields assessment grant. In 2017, the Commission worked with owners and prospective developers at six (6) properties to sample sites or plan for contaminate remediation.

- *Bonacorsi-Capital Candy, Barre City:* CVRPC invested in a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment to assist Capital Candy understand its environmental obligations prior to acquiring the Bonacorsi property, which it leases. Impacts from historic dry cleaning operations may require installation of an air quality system in the building, similar to a radon mitigation system. The project facilitates Capital Candy's business expansion, allowing it to add jobs.
- *Woodbury Country Store, Woodbury:* CVRPC assisted the Town of Woodbury to guide a multiagency effort to buy out a former general store and gas station and restore the

floodplain in Woodbury's village center. When completed, the project will reduce flooding and flood damages to other properties. CVRPC will invest \$40,000 in EPA brownfield funds for assessment activities in addition to staff time to help ensure multiple funding sources are coordinated and used efficiently. VEM, DEC, and VTrans have partnered with the Town.

- *12 Keith Avenue, Barre City:* To implement its North Main to Summer Street Master Plan, the City of Barre committed to building a parking area for Downstreet's redevelopment of 22 Keith Avenue. CVRPC invested brownfield funds for sampling and a Corrective Action Plan for the parking area to help insure sealing the site with pavement does not exacerbate contaminate movement onto other properties.
- *Former Ernie's Garage, Barre City:* Ayer's Autobody previously participated in CVRPC's brownfields program to develop a brownfield property. Based on that success, the company purchased a second property for redevelopment and plans to expand operations. CVRPC invested in a Phase II assessment to investigate potential challenges at the new site.
- *Fire and Recycling Station, Whiting:* The statutory relationship of Vermont's regional planning commissions allows RPCs to maximize federal brownfield investments by sharing resources across boundaries. CVRPC supported a Phase II assessment at a Town-owned property in Whiting (Addison County) to leverage the property's redevelopment into a municipal facility.
- *Former Clark's Feed, Barre City:* CVRPC is supporting Barre City's Merchants Row redevelopment through site characterization at the former Clark's Feed Store property. When redeveloped as parking, this site will support full use of the Blanchard Block, a former brownfields property, where use by large tenants is hindered by a lack of dedicated parking.

Economic and Community Development

Economic growth is supported best when development efforts are partnered with solid planning functions. RPCs work with towns and in strong partnership with Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) to this end in a number of ways, including development of comprehensive strategies that will help to position Vermont for long term economic gain.

- Continued inventorying and mapping more than 1,300 sewer manholes in Barre Town, supporting the Town's effort to strengthen its infrastructure management and maintenance.
- Assisted Barre City to implement recommendations of the Vermont Economic Resiliency Initiative. CVRPC developed maps and provide grant writing assistance for floodplain buyouts, helping the City reduce damages and recover more quickly after disasters.
- Successfully managed a Community Development Block Grant for Washington to increase access to the Calef Memorial Library. CVRPC staff successfully guided the town and library through a myriad of federal and state award conditions.
- Assisted Calais with a successful grant application to develop a Village Revitalization Plan, which aims to revitalize the village and reestablish it as an economic and civic hub.

Transportation Planning

Through contract with the VTrans, RPCs coordinate the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI). This effort has provided a statewide framework for public involvement in planning the improvements to Vermont's transportation system, with local communities represented through regional Transportation Advisory Committees (TACs). Each regional TAC prioritizes projects, identifies local and regional transportation needs, and provides the platform for public involvement in the planning

and development of the state's transportation system. RPCs serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support local, regional, state and federal transportation network advancement.

Objective #1 - Cooperation and Coordination between VTrans, Regions and Municipalities

- **TAC Activity** - Hosted 10 TAC meetings with an average municipal participation of 52%.
- **TAC Outcomes**
 - Evaluated and ranked 8 State paving projects.
 - Evaluated and ranked 15 Town Highway Bridges pre candidate for consideration of future VTrans Capital Program funding.
 - Funded 2 intersection studies and a enhanced transit ridership survey.
 - Fostered support for implementing road diets using a tour of the Barre-Montpelier Road project.
- **Other Outreach**
 - Facilitated 2 local road foreman meetings. One highlighted hydro seeders, which reduce erosion by restoring vegetation more quickly than hand casting seed.
 - Provided direct training to 6 communities about the Municipal Roads General Permit.
 - Convened human service and health care sector representatives to discuss needs as part of Green Mountain Transit's Net Gen Transit Plan. Project will enhance service through route adjustments or reconfigurations and elimination or addition of service.
 - Assisted Cabot and Marshfield with a request to VTrans to reclassify Route 215.
 - Facilitated Marshfield's request for a Road Safety Audit of Cabot Road to address safety and vehicle speed concerns.
- **Data Collection**
 - Inventoried bridge and culvert locations in 5 communities.
 - Conducted 22 traffic counts in Barre Town, Berlin, Cabot, Marshfield, Middlesex, Montpelier, and Waitsfield.
 - Conducted 3 park and ride surveys.
 - Conducted 6 road erosion inventories for Calais, Duxbury, Montpelier, Roxbury, Waitsfield and Warren.
 - Conducted pedestrian counts in Waterbury and Northfield.

Objective #2 - Conformance with Act 200 and Facilitating Decentralized Decision Making

The Central Vermont Regional Transportation Plan was adopted September 8, 2008. The plan has been updated and will be incorporated into *Plan Central Vermont*. Adoption is scheduled for fall 2018.

CVRPC participated in 2 project scoping efforts, 1 accelerated bridge meeting. CVRPC participated in the redesign of VTrans' project prioritization process and public involvement guidebook.

CVRPC's Project Review Committee reviewed 1 Act 250 application for transportation issues. The Committee determined the project did not have substantial regional impact.

Objective #3 - Providing Transportation Planning Support to Municipalities

Short-range transportation planning providing direct assistance to municipalities is **48%** of CVRPC's transportation budget. A large portion of the coordination activities also includes municipal assistance. Municipal projects included:

- Managed the Vermont On-line Bridge and Culvert Inventory Tool for RPCs and towns, participated in its upgrade, and coached users.
- Lead a site visit of RPC and Vermont Youth Conservation Corps staff to standardize road inventories for the Municipal Roads General Permit.
- Trained Calais road staff on data collection for hydrologically connected road segments.
- Worked with the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps to identify towns for Class IV road inventories and installation of best management practices to address gully erosion.
- Wrote or provided significant technical assistance to **13** transportation-related grant applications. Includes Better Roads Program, Transportation Alternatives, Better Connections, and Bicycle and Pedestrian.

Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Resiliency

RPCs play key roles in the mitigation and preparedness phases of emergency management in partnership with Vermont Emergency Management (VEM), the Vermont Homeland Security Unit, VTrans and the Agency of Natural Resources. RPCs provide direct staff to the State Emergency Operations Center, administrative support to the Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs) and coordination among responders and planners throughout the State's four Public Safety Districts. RPC's also help update floodplain bylaws and FEMA-required hazard mitigation plans, coordinate updates to municipal emergency plans and assisted as needed in special circumstances like Tropical Storm Irene and other declared disasters.

- 23 (100%) of municipalities in the region currently have a hazard mitigation plan either adopted or under review.
- 21 (91%) of municipalities in the region currently have an updated local emergency plan. CVRPC supported towns with LEOP Annex development for Tier II summary reports, Animal Disaster Response Plans, Debris Management Plans, Emergency Contact databases by support functions, mutual aid lists, Delegation of Authority lists, and maps.
- Hosted an Incident Command System training for local officials. Municipal officials are required to be ICS-trained to certify LEOPs. Having an LEOP increases town disaster readiness, and is a factor for higher reimbursement under the Emergency Relief Assistance Fund (ERAF).
- Collaborated with VEM to support 4 other preparedness trainings - spring flood preparedness, the role of Emergency Management Directors, rail car incident response, and dam safety.
- Assisted LEPC 5 to recruit 7 new members, increasing its active members by 54%. LEPC's are voluntary partnerships of local governments and industries. They work to increase awareness about the presence and potential release of chemicals and plan for responses.
- Completed a flood model for the Mad River Valley and sections of the Winooski River and Thatcher Brook in Waterbury. The model identifies vulnerable infrastructure and buildings so landowners and municipalities can amend flood maps and mobilize resilience projects.
- Assisted Plainfield and Waterbury to develop high priority, hazard mitigation project packets. Towns will add the information to hazard mitigation plans and use it to leverage funding.

Geographic Information System Services

In addition to enhancing the RPC work, RPC's provide municipalities, state agencies and regional groups with mapping and data analysis in support of their projects.

- Mapped historic districts for all municipalities. The districts will be posted online by VCGI.
- Completed E911 maps for all municipalities for use by town officials, emergency responders, and others. The maps are posted on our website and accessible to the public.
- Created web maps for Calais and Berlin to enhance public accessibility to town parcel, zoning, flooding, and natural resource data.
- Created maps for Waterbury's wayfinding project, which will enhance its economic vitality.
- Prepared maps for Waterbury and Moretown's successful village center designations.
- Completed zoning maps for Northfield and Plainfield and Town Plan maps for Woodbury.
- Updated Duxbury's emergency zone road maps.
- Developed transportation vulnerability assessments for nine communities for incorporation into their local hazard mitigation plans.

Energy Conservation and Development

A renewed focus on clean, renewable, sustainable and affordable energy presents Vermont with great opportunity and significant challenges. RPCs integrate energy planning with land use, transportation and natural resources efforts, and work with municipalities to assist with project implementation. RPCs participate in Section 248 proceedings and support comprehensive planning at the local and regional level to inform the permitting process.

- Participated in Green Mountain Transit's Next Gen Transit Study to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the region's transit services.
- Developed an enhanced regional energy plan to position the region for its energy future and support the state's goal of 90% renewable energy by 2050. The project includes energy demand and generation modeling and mapping of areas with renewable generation potential.
- Hosted two general trainings and three one-on-one trainings about Act 174's requirements.
- Reviewed 4 municipal plans and coached municipalities on compliance with Act 174.

Watershed Planning and Project Development

RPCs work with the Agency of Natural Resources to assist with completion of the EPA required watershed plans. RPCs also work with municipalities to implement river corridor assessments in local planning and regulations which result in better and safer growth management decisions.

- Worked with ANR and other RPCs to develop procedures for ranking water quality projects. Fostered understanding that using statewide priorities may not maximize benefit in all basins.
- Assisted communities on grant applications for stormwater mitigation projects
- Managed two stormwater master plan projects, a regional effort for Barre City, Barre Town, and Plainfield and a local effort in Berlin. Towns will set priorities for clean water action.
- Developed a statewide procedure to refine ANR's river corridor mapping, and worked with Waterbury to pilot the process.
- Assisted the state's Watershed Coordinator with municipal engagement for the Winooski River basin.

- Fostered an intermunicipal project with Cabot, Marshfield, and Plainfield to explore how forest integrity can support watershed resiliency. Friends of the Winooski River and Vermont Woodlands Association are co-leaders with CVRPC.
- Assisted the Mad River Ridge to River team to address stormwater issues. The team established a menu of regulatory actions that foster thoughtful site planning and layout by taking advantage of existing stormwater controls. Friends of the Mad River lead the effort.

Special Projects

CVRPC collaborated with Plainfield, Milone and MacBroom, and UVM for the Plainfield Village Bridges Alternatives Analysis. The project used cutting-edge unmanned aerial systems, or drone technology, with hydraulic analysis to devise alternative designs for two bridges. Extreme weather events, which wash large woody debris to the bridges, resulted in tens of thousands of dollars in damage to both bridges on multiple occasions over the past decade. The National Association of Development Organization awarded the project a 2017 Excellence in Regional Transportation Award.

CVRPC continued its collaboration with the Washington County Regional Prevention Partnership on Healthy Community Design. For 2017, CVRPC provided guidance on working with municipalities to inventory ordinances and policies as they pertain to alcohol and other substances. Central Vermont communities strongly support physical exercise and nutrition. The Partnership's work to build Community Health Profiles will assist communities to understand how and whether their ordinances and policies compliment their healthy community efforts.

Administration and Funding

The FY 17 CVRPC budget was approximately \$1.3 million. Revenue sources included state and federal performance contracts, grants, and local assessments. Virtually all of the CVRPC's revenue sources are tied to contracts with scopes of work, guidelines, and/or performance measures. This means CVRPC has limited flexibility in how it chooses to use the vast majority of its funding. Funding received through town assessments is the exception, which makes this funding stream particularly important. It gives us the greatest latitude to respond to the region's needs. The grants we receive enable us to work with our towns on areas such as transportation, emergency planning, community development, brownfields redevelopment, energy, and natural resources. Revenue from virtually all federal and state grantors requires non-federal matching funds ranging from 10 percent (Transportation Planning Initiative) to 50 percent (Emergency Management Planning Grant). Town assessments and regional planning funds passed through to CVRPC under a performance contract with the Department of Housing and Community Development provide matching funds.

CVRPC opened a line of credit in 2017, partially in response to the prevalence of product-based contracts in its budget. CVRPC maintains Board designated reserve funds to cover operating shortfalls, accrued leave time, and equipment replacement. The Commission maintains a four-year plan for equipment and software upgrades and replacement.

CVRPC's annual audit will be completed in the fall of 2017. CVRPC has had no audit findings in recent years and as such is considered a 'low risk' grantee by federal agencies. Staffing in 2017 included 13 employees: the Executive Director, Program Manager, Senior Planners (2), Planners (2), Assistant Planners (2), and Finance and Office Manager. CVRPC leases 2 employees to the Mad River Valley

Planning District and 1 employee to the Cross Vermont Trail. CVRPC supports workforce development through use of summer planning technicians for transportation and planning services.

In 2017, CVRPC updated its procurement procedures, personnel policies, GIS services and other policies, and substantially revised jobs descriptions and its performance appraisal process. CVRPC initiated development of a Commissioner Handbook to orient Board members to the Commission.

In 2017, CVRPC experienced the passing of three long-time family members: Transportation Planner Steve Gladczuk, retired Grants and Office Manager Laurie Emery, and Town of Orange Commissioner, George Malek. Their laughter and contributions remain in our hearts.